

The Role of Private Schools in Education Reform in Nigeria

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Abstract: The broad intent of any educational reform is premised on the assumption that it is capable of improving educational process and practices, hence, the need for evaluation of the system's process in order to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of resource allocation. Education is capital intensive in terms of human, financial and material resources. Its provision and management determine the quality and functionality of the system. This paper sought to assess the extent to which privatization policy has actually addressed quality improvement and also verify if there is justification for private participation in the provision and management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria in an attempt to suggesting some quality improvement strategies. The rationale for deregulation and privatization of the sector was provided and the challenges in the policy were also highlighted. Based on this, it was concluded that though privatization policy enhances access, it is not a panacea to quality tertiary education. In addition, there must be a strict adherence to globally set criteria for improvement, enhancement of educational agencies, especially those in charge of management and supervision of tertiary institutions as well as regular reforms in the process and practice within the sector.

Keywords: Education, Reform, Privatisation, Improvement, Decentralization, Quality-Assurance Deregulation.

Introduction

Reform is useful and desirable in every sector of human lives. However, reform is only required when the existing system has failed or obsolete. There could be reform in any area of a country's status which may include: political, economic, social, cultural or educational reform etc. Therefore, the issue of reform in Nigeria education system is not peculiar. Advanced nations like Finland, Singapore, and the United States continually reform their education system (Zinth, 2014; Brenneman, 2014; Christie, 2014). Literature shows that developing countries like India and Qatar similarly had times of reform in their educational system (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2017, Nasser *et al.*, 2014). A Reform starts with the identification of a problem, which is further studied, analysed, and evaluated (Omosewo, 2008).

Thus, the journey to any sustainable and worthwhile reform is long. In order to identify the problem, there may be the need for surveying and conducting series of test: Aptitude, Achievement, and Competency test as the case demanded. The instrument for the survey and test must be constructed by the experts within the field to ensure reliability and validity (Flippo & Foster, 1984).

Education is indeed the fuel that aggravates development and it helps create an egalitarian society devoid of poverty, unemployment, frustration, inter communal clashed and other menaces that affect our society. It is also considered as the way of life when goes on all the time in our society. Planned or unplanned, notice or unnoticed, positive or negative. Education is for

life and for living. It is an investment in people which pays untold dividends to the society, when that investment is not made or is made inadequate the society suffers a loss.

The importance of education to any nation cannot be over emphasized. It is in recognition of this importance that the international community and governments all over the world have made commitments for citizens to have access to education. Education is a human right that should be given to all human beings. In recent times, there have been quite a number of international human rights instruments that provide for education as a fundamental human right to all. Some of these instruments include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981).

The major trigger activity for a basic education programme in the 1990s was the World Conference on Education For All (WCEFA), which was held in Jomtien, Thailand from 5-9th March 1990. The World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO organized this conference and UNICEF as they came up with a document entitled "World Declaration on Education For All and Framework for Action to meet basic needs". The communiqué of the conference stated clearly in Article 1 that every person – child, Youth and Adult – shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic needs. This declaration was reaffirmed at the World Summit for Children also held in 1990, which stated that all children should have access to basic education by the year 2000.

This World Summit for Children placed a lot of emphasis on raising the levels of female literacy. These documents, therefore, became a blue print for all countries of the world, including Nigeria, to step up education activities to achieve Education For All (EFA). Furthermore, in recent times the culture of globalisation has equally engendered new social and economic reforms, such that many countries of the world are redefining their educational goals and priorities in order to complete effectively in the emerging global village. As a result, many countries are signatories to some global reforms. Two such goals are the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the Education For All (EFA) Goals. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was adopted in September 2000 at the United Nations Millennium Declaration has two of the eight goals devoted to education. They are goal:

1. Universal primary education
2. Gender equality and empower women
3. Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger
4. Achievement of universal primary education
5. Promotion of gender and women empowerment
6. Reduction of child mortality
7. Improvement of maternal health
8. Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
9. Ensuring environmental sustainability

In a bid to achieve education goals, the Dakar World Education Forum was held as a follow-up meeting to the WCEFA where new sets of goals were set, to be attained by the year 2015. The goals include:

- (i) Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- (ii) Ensuring that by 2015 all children with special emphasis on girls, children in difficult circumstances and from ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;

- (iii) Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
- (iv) Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- (v) Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
- (vi) Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence for all so that recognized and reasonable learning outcomes are achieved, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Over the years, Nigeria has expressed a commitment to some of these instruments in education with the strong belief that overcoming illiteracy and ignorance will form a basis for accelerated national development. These two globally emerging goals have far reaching implications for restructuring and reforming education in most countries of the world. Nigeria, being a signatory to both the MDG and the EFA goals, made the Federal Government of Nigeria to establish in 2004 the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). According to Obioma (2006), the critical elements of NEEDS are:

- i) Value orientation
- ii) Poverty eradication
- iii) Job creation and employment generation
- iv) Empowering people through education in order to achieve the first three goals

Some of the implications of the NEEDS reform measures for the Nigerian educational system are as follows:

- a. Enhancement of access
- b. Improvement of quality
- c. Reviewing and renewing the curriculum periodically
- d. Promotion of ICT capabilities
- e. Encouragement of public-private partnership

According to Igbuzor (2006), the poor state of education in Nigeria has suffered from years of neglect, compounded by inadequate attention to policy frameworks within the sector. Findings from an ongoing educational sector analysis confirm the poor state of education in Nigeria has increased the national literacy rate at 57 percent. Some 49 percent of the teaching force is unqualified. There are acute shortages of infrastructure and facilities at all levels. Access to basic education is inhibited by gender issues and sociocultural beliefs and practices, among other factors. Wide disparities persist in educational standards and learning achievements. The system emphasizes theoretical knowledge at the expense of technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial education. School curricula need urgent review to make them relevant and practice oriented.

For Nigeria to be able to achieve the targets of MDGs and EFA, a number of new policies and new directions have emerged. In this paper, I will highlight some of the recent reforms at each of our levels of the educational system in Nigeria and show how these reforms are consistent with these goals. Furthermore, I shall highlight some of the challenges that flow from such reforms and finally offer some useful suggestions.

New Directions in Primary Education in Nigeria

Since 1960, when there was a continental conference in Addis Ababa, African countries have been committed to universal primary education. At that conference, 1980 was set as the target

year for the achievement of universal primary education. Although this goal was not met, enrollment was far greater than the projections had suggested it would be. In 1976, the Federal Government of Nigeria committed itself to universal primary education (UPE), a move seen as a means of working toward the equalization of educational opportunities by providing a minimum level to which all children would be educated. Even though, the UPE program was as a success in that millions of Nigerian children were able to receive a primary education, however, over a twenty-year period the UPE programme faced many problems. According to Tahir (2000) include:

1. Overstretched facilities and overcrowded classrooms
2. Population explosion in recruitment into schools
3. Imbalances in educational attainment
4. Unqualified and untrained teachers;
5. Poor remuneration in teachers' wages leading to poor motivation and low morale;
6. Little or no plans for career development for teachers;
7. Inflexible curricula;
8. Inadequate supervision of schools

The Universal Basic Education (Ube) Programme

In order to ensure total eradication of illiteracy in the country through the provision of education for all, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme on September 30, 1999 in response to the challenges in the primary education sector. The UBE is a governments' response to addressing the distortion in the basic education sector so as to ensure an unfettered access to basic education and improve the quality of its provision.

The aims and objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) include among others to:

- (i) develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- (ii) provide free compulsory Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school-going-age;
- (iii) reduce drastically dropout rate from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency;

The UBE scheme has three major components. These are:

- (i) Formal basic education encompassing the first nine years of schooling (Primary and Junior secondary education for all children).
- (ii) Nomadic education for school age children and education for migrant fishermen.
- (iii) Literacy and non-formal education for out of school children and illiterate adults.

The Federal Government through an Act of 2004 established formally the Universal Basic Education Commission in order to successfully implement the programme. Furthermore, the Government also established an intervention fund for the smooth implementation of the UBE programme in the states. By this Act, State UBE Boards (SUBEB) and Local Government Education Agencies (LGEA) were equally established through state edicts.

Specifically, the Universal Basic Education Act (2004) and the Child Rights Act provide the legal framework for the implementation of the Programme, which makes basic education not only free but also compulsory. In addition, as a signatory to the 2000 World Education Conference, and the 6 Dakar Goals towards achieving Education for All (EFA), Government has also established a National EFA Coordination unit under the Federal Ministry of Education mandated to prepare a National Action Plan for the delivery of EFA in Nigeria.

From September 2006, Nigeria formally commenced the systematic implementation of the 9-year basic education programme (an integration of primary and junior secondary schools (JSS) with regard to the school curricula). This programme is supposed to ensure that pupils remain in school for 9 years of continuous study, will drive by the adoption of the new 9-year basic education curricula. It is envisaged that the curricula will be systematically introduced in year 1 of the 6-year primary school and year 1 of the 3-year JSS, and by the year 2015, the 9-year basic education curricula will become fully operational in the school system in Nigeria

The philosophy of the 9-year basic education curricula is to ensure that every learner who has gone through 9 years of basic education should have acquired appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life- skills; as well as the ethical, moral, and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning The 9-year basic education curricula will focus on strategic basic contents for the achievement of the country's reform initiatives in value-orientation, poverty eradication, and wealth generation and job creation.

Education Reform

Imoke (2011) said that, "education reforms are representatives of conscious evolution of policy regimes which are capable of bringing significant revolutionary change in the sector. The intent of such reform is to make it more responsive to the needs of the people. It is also important to know that education is a public good one which benefit non-proprietors. An educated workforce is a vital component of a dynamic economy and all its stakeholders both educated and non-educated. According to Cohen (2003), "education reform in any setting is an arrangement by a group of persons or a country to change the „status quo ante, it is the change in policy in education to make better by converting or making improvement from the deficiencies that are in the previous policy. Its main aim is to eradicate the exercise and effects of illegitimate power" Onuigbo (2009) as well said that educational reform is a long process that begins with problem identification, studying, analysis of the existing structure and ending with the evaluation and termination of the programme. It as well involves the development of an alternative policy, experimentation, implementation and feedback. The basic requirement is to meet the needs and aspiration of the people.

Reform has to do with injecting new processes and facilities into an organization, and integrating them to improve the performance of that organization. The provision of excellent service is the major concern of every reform. Omolewa (2007), stated that educational reforms emanate from the basic conviction that considerable progress can be made in a nation by its people through careful engineering of the educational process. Imoke (2011), emphasized the need for reform when he stated that, "modern societal conditions are reshaping education the world over in a rapid and profound manner. Modern technologies coupled with global economic forces have contributed to an intense and pervasive level of individual, organizational, and international interdependence

These new societal dynamics are altering education every bit as much as they are challenging the home life, workplace lifestyle, and political economy of virtually every person in every village, in almost every nation. This point cannot be overemphasized as the world increasingly becomes a global village, driven by a knowledge economy. It is becoming more evident that human capital has become an increasingly valuable asset in the race for industrialization and thus the management of policy concerning this most vital sector has become more important necessitating the need for constant review and reform. These reforms can be broad as was the case in 1954 and the implementation of the whole educational system change from 8-6-2-3 to 6-5-2-3 or they can be specific to the relevant level such as the setting up of a quality assurance mechanism for higher institutions.

Therefore, for an organization to continue to be effective and efficient, it has to be open to reform Obasanjo (2012), the history of Nigeria runs parallel to the history of Nigerian education, because of the realization by the early nationalists that the country could not develop without a proper grounding in a national education system that can guarantee the production of the desired

high quality workforce without which national development is impossible. It is not surprising that the early nationalists were also educators, missionaries, and journalists. Our history as a people is significant for the reform efforts that have been undertaken, with varying degrees of success to get our people to address pressing problems of personal and social development. The current reform agenda and transformation programmes of the Federal Government of Nigeria are part of the historical attempts to direct public attention to necessary changes that must be undertaken collectively and separately to address our daunting challenges in public and private spheres, especially in higher education. More than 50 years ago, the visionaries who founded the University of Nigeria had no doubt about the transformative power of education and its contribution to national development. Unlike any other Nigerian institution of higher learning, the University of Nigeria was established to blaze the trail in the production of a Nigerian workforce equipped with a unique education tailored to address Nigerian problems

The Federal government of Nigeria under the leadership of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo initiated a massive reform of the entire sectors of the economy from banking to education in 1999. In 2006, the government launched a major education reform programme, with a revised vision statement, which led to a comprehensive education sector analysis, and a 10-Year Education Sector Plan. There is also the overcelebrated vision 2020 document with its ambitious projection of making Nigeria “become an emerging economy model, delivering sound education policy and management for public good. The vision of which is to produce effective and efficient economy.

In the education system, one of the reform agendum was targeted at the colleges of education. Some of these colleges have completed some of the core reform activities such as personal audit and rightsizing. It is not clear the direction of subsequent reform activities of these colleges. It has become necessary to know how the workers of these colleges feel about the reform activities already completed. This, it is hoped, will guide further reform activities of the colleges. The Bureau of Public Service Reforms (2006) made provisions in its guidelines for perception surveys that will provide information that ensures stakeholders support for the reforms.

The Fundamental Issues in the Nigerian Education Reform

Reform is a long journey that starts with the identification of problems. It is clear that there are problems in the nation’s education sector. It is evident in the academic performance of students in all level of education and output of schools at all levels (Idakwoji, 2016). Okemakinde, Adewuyi, and Alabi (2013) noted that there had been a decline in the quality of candidates admitted into the tertiary institutions as a result of the weak output of both the primary and the secondary levels.

The first fundamental issue is the lack of standards. According to Nasser *et al.* (2014), standards-based reform is the key to school reform principle. Therefore, for a sustainable reform, the starting point is to set standards for our education. According to Libman, (2012), most education reforms have emphasized the importance of establishing national standards for student achievement, for the quality of teaching, and for the effectiveness of curricula for schools and teacher training institutions. There are two un-official programmes practiced by some colleges of education called Re-run and Amnesty which are not found anywhere in the NCCE minimum standard. The programmes are used to assist poor students towards graduation or promotion to the next academic level. The abuse of the programmes confirmed the submission of Libman. Many poor students explored these programmes to obtain their National Certificate in Education (NCE) when they did not merit the certificate. Most of these NCE holders are teaching in our schools today. The question is: how would these teachers be effective? Where there are primary, secondary and higher education; there must be strict standards to be followed at these three levels with enforcement of compliances starting from the Teachers Training Schools. Floating standards gives rise to programmes like the Re-run and Amnesty in the college of education explained above. The country must reform its standards and enforce these standards ensuring strict compliance at all levels from the onset. Schools, Colleges, and Universities are established and managed as pleased by the States, corporate bodies and individuals at times, even without

standard accreditation. This is the beginning of the problem, and the reform must start here.

Conceptual Views of Private School

According to the international definition used in UNESCO questionnaires, a private school is a school not operated by a public authority, whether or not operated the schools receives financial support from such authority. This management is the decisive criterion for international purposes. Other criteria may be the ownership of school, its source of income. The stated purpose of a school and the clientele it serves may also indicate its non-public character as in the case of religious and ethnic schools which is generally aim to maintain a particular succulence. Each of these criteria is useful but difficult to apply universally to distinguish private form public schools.

The Role of Private institutions in education Reform in Nigeria

The word 'private' is a broad concept which includes religious, nongovernmental organization-run, community-financed and/or for-profit institutions. In fact, large private school system exists in many developed and developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. There are a number of institutions across the different levels of education ranging from pre-primary, primary, secondary to tertiary institutions that are run and managed by the private sector all over the world. The issue of private involvement in provision of education is not new at the primary and secondary school levels particularly in Nigeria. But it is only at the tertiary level that this is recent, with the emergence of Igbinedion University, Edo state, Covenant University, Otta, Ogun State and Babcock University, Illishan-Remo in the past ten years. However, one could conveniently say that the Nigerian educational system needs private participation in the provision and management of educational institutions because of the dynamic nature of education exacerbated by its inherent enormous resources required for the realization of national goals and objectives.

That aside, it is imperative to consider the constitutional base of private sector participation in the provision and management of Nigerian educational system. The constitutional base of the 1887 Education Ordinance which formed a milestone in the provision and management of education in Nigeria became pronounced in 1979, Section 36 sub sections 2 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 1979, 1989 and 1999). It asserts that, every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions... This shows that any Nigerian or group of Nigerians could establish and manage educational institutions, provided the requirements are satisfied. According to Okojie (2010), the statutory framework laid down by the Federal Government of Nigeria for the regulation of private providers of tertiary education is fully encapsulated in Education (Minimum Standard and Establishment of Institutions) Act Cap E3 Laws of Federation of Nigeria 2004. Section 21 (1) & (3) of this Act provides that:

- Application for the establishment of an institution of higher learning shall be made to the Minister;
- In case of a University, through the national Universities Commission;
- In case of a Polytechnic or College of Agriculture, through the National Board for Technical Education;
- In the case of a College of Education, through the National Commission for Colleges of Education; and
- In any other case, through the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, in accordance with guidelines prescribed for making the application

No person shall be granted approval to establish an institution of higher education unless the criteria set out in the schedule has been satisfied. At the schedule of this Act are the clearly set criteria that intending proprietors should meet before they can be granted approval to operate. These include:

1. proper, well-spread and relevant academic structure; evidence of adequate current and capital funding; evidence of sufficient and adequate academic and support staff;
2. full compliance of the staffing guidelines particularly the staff-student ratios prescribed for the various courses by the three regulatory bodies (NUC, NBTE, NCCE as the case may be); demonstrated sources of sustainable funding of the proposed institution with minimum prescription of N200million for University, N100million for Polytechnic or Monotechnic and N50million for Colleges of Education;
3. a well-laid out master plan for infrastructural and programme development; laws and statutes that shall not conflict with the conventional responsibilities in academic or interfere with avowed traditional institutional autonomy; well-articulated mission and set objectives; and a credible administrative and academic structure; and
4. The library, laboratory and workshop facilities, including instructional and consumables shall be adequate and there shall be long-range plans for sustaining them and proposed acceptable plans for linkages with similar institutions that can assist the proposed institutions to achieve its objective.

In order to properly implement the above criteria for approving tertiary institutions, the NUC as the appropriate authority vested with powers to process and consider applications for establishment of universities and degree-awarding institutions, set up and institutionalized 14 steps for processing applications for private universities. This is to ensure that institutions are provided and managed in accordance with the global trend.

Be that as it may, the pith and substance of the intention of the Federal Government is very clear, to the effect that private individuals or corporate bodies intending to establish private tertiary institutions must meet certain criteria that would translate to guaranteed quality assurance and sustenance of minimum standards (Okojie, 2010). He explained that despite the criteria set by the Federal Government of Nigeria, there are quite a number of illegal tertiary institutions. Okojie also pointed out that some of these providers did not establish their institutions through the established regulatory agencies, most and all the essential indices of academic standards are non-existent in their institutions.

The Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (2010) pointed out that four factors are responsible for the recent upsurge in the number of illegal providers of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. These include:

1. The greed, fraud and the endemic rate of corruption in the society. The major motivational issue here is to corrupt the education system by providing substandard institutions in return for the fees they charge their students. These illegal providers are mainly driven by the greed to make quick money, without any desire to comply with the required prescribed regulations, which ordinarily demands more investment in the academic and human resources, together with infrastructural facilities.
2. There exist the problems of insufficient access for the large pool of qualified candidates that sit for the yearly Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations (UTME) organized by Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB). As a result, these providers take undue advantage of desperate but unqualified candidates to attract them to their illegal institutions where entry requirements are usually less demanding.
3. It has been discovered that a major factor that makes the illegal tertiary education, especially the universities, thrive is that they have no set standard for anybody that can pay their fees. The NUC has therefore discovered that majority of their students are not qualified for entry into university or tertiary institutions.
4. The non-existence of specific sanction for operating illegal tertiary institution without approval or licence has also contributed to escalation in the phenomenon of illegal provider of tertiary education, particularly the illegal degree mills. However, the National Universities

Commission has proposed a bill to National Assembly through the supervising ministry, that is, Federal Ministry of Education, to criminalise and punish promoters and operators of illegal degree mills so as to deter potential violators (Okojie, 2010).

Ensuring quality assurance in higher education in Nigeria

Since higher education in Nigeria has not produced a critical mass of persons with the requisite genetic skills highlighted in the National Policy on Education through the domineering control of the Federal government, the following fundamental factors, which bedeviled the public institutions need to be addressed: unplanned expansion leading to a very rapid increase in the number of institutions since 1975; duplication of courses and programmes; poor state of infrastructure; inadequate teaching-learning and research facilities; overstretching of teaching, research and managerial capacities; overblotted student enrolment far above carrying capacity; an upsurge of various forms of unwholesome behaviours, such as examination malpractices, falsification of certificates, cultism, commercialization syndrome; internal and external brain drain among the intellectuals; and absolute loss of faith in the entire system by all stakeholders (see, for example, Ojo, 2007; World Bank, 2000; Okojie, 2010, and Oladipo, 2010).

Thus, privatization does not on its own provide qualitative education without requisite consideration for a total reform in the sector. According to Babalola (2007), five policy areas need further attention in Nigeria's tertiary education.

First, there is a dire need to review the philosophy, academic culture and purpose of tertiary education to include:

- i. making targeted investments in strategic areas of training and research,
- ii. Expanding the production of qualified professionals most required by local organizations and industries, and
- iii. Building capacity for managing and improving basic and secondary education.

Second, in an attempt to achieve the above objectives, all Nigerian tertiary institutions should focus on:

- i. strengthening of governance by establishing boards with external representation
- ii. Formulation of strategic vision based on the above
- iii. Embarking on curricular diversification
- iv. Emphasizing science and technological development
- v. embarking on quality and relevance improvement
- vi. Concentrating on expansion of equity mechanisms
- vii. Ensuring a sustainable financing, and
- viii. Development of ICT.

Third policy thrust concerns complimentary measures in order to ensure that tertiary institutions enjoy an environment that is conducive to teaching, learning, creativity and innovation.

Fourth, addressing unification of tertiary education structure in order to eliminate the distinction between the systems (university and polytechnic) in terms of input, (including finance and control), process (including type of research, curriculum orientation and assessment), output and how their graduates are being rewarded. To this end, all other tertiary institutions should strive to attain university status.

Lastly, re-engineering of the departmental approach to teaching and research, that is, shifting towards a problem-based mode of knowledge creation and away from the classic discipline-led approach, and the blurring of the distinction between basic and applied research. With the above review in mind, tertiary education in Nigeria will accomplish its goals irrespective of the

ownership.

That aside, there is the need for review of the existing and development of sound/realistic National Policy on Education; establishment of reinforced supervisory/monitoring agencies; strict compliance with minimum qualification for teaching and non-teaching staff in the institutions; and increased allocation to the tertiary institutions among others

Current Involvement of the Private Sector in Education and Skills Development in Nigeria

Until recently, the government has largely been responsible for the provision of 'education in Nigeria, with very minimal involvement of the private sector, Public funding of education includes direct government expenditures (for teachers' salaries and instructional materials) as well as indirect expenditures in the form of subsidies to households such as tax reductions, scholarships, loans and grants. It also includes payments from the Education Trust Fund (ETF) mainly for capital expenditures. The increasing demand of education on public finances at a time when government revenues are stagnant or even falling requires additional sources of financial support

Since the early 1980s, considerable attention has been given to greater use of corporate, community and household sources of finance for education. At present, private sources account for about 20% of total national expenditure on education. All corporations' and companies of identified minimum operating capacity and registered in Nigeria contribute a levy of 2% of their annual assessable profits to the Education Trust Fund (ETF). The fund complements federal, state and local government budgets for primary, secondary and tertiary institutions nationwide. It identifies areas of weakness in educational sector and intervenes with funding. It also serves to enhance educational facilities and infrastructure development, and promotes innovative approaches to educational learning and services.

Private sector involvement in education in Nigeria is equally gaining prominence in terms of philanthropic activities such as companies giving bursaries and scholarships to undergraduate students in different tertiary institutions. This is done mainly by large corporate and parastatal organizations. In addition, many of these companies also provide scholarships and bursaries to employee's children. Private companies also support educational institutions through donations of cash, equipment or materials as part of their corporate responsibility, (Emunemu 2008). Private schooling is significant in every state of Nigeria. The private sector for primary and secondary education has been growing for the past two decades. The widespread loss of public confidence in primary and secondary education has been largely attributed to the proliferation of private schools. In a similar vein, following the lifting of the ban on the establishment of private universities in 1993, there was an unprecedented proliferation in the establishment of private universities.

Currently, there are a total ninety-two universities in the country (twenty-seven federal, thirty state and thirty-five private, universities) as at November 2007 (JAMB Report, 2007). It is interesting to note however that in the area of skills development, the private has been particularly outstanding and impressive. This is against the backdrop of the fact that many of the companies and corporations have provided the much needed for a where many undergraduate students in higher institutions of learning develop their basic skills in their differently fields of study through internship programmes. Such programmes run for between 3 months to 12 months. Undergraduate students on Industrial Attachment are expected to acquire relevant and needed skills from these companies and organizations.

Proposal for More Effective Private Sector Participation in Education and Skills Development

One could look at private involvement in Nigeria on a graduating scale from arm's length denominations, to partnerships with educational institutions right through to the active participation in the provision of educational services- for profit. All the activities along this scale can be enhanced to improve the quality and access to education and skills development

opportunities.

Partnership

In the area of partnerships and collaborations, the private sector could work with the educational institutions to ensure the relevance of curriculum of private sector needs. In this regard, a number of partnership initiatives could be considered:

- 1) Corporate executives work with educators to develop curricula that reflects private- sector technology, standards and practice.
- 2) Mentor programmes, where professional and entrepreneurs have links with individual students.
- 3) Students are expected to gain tremendously from such interactions.
- 4) Capitalizing on expertise, whereby institutions with organizations could business educational business set up programmes that focus on various specific aspects of business education, e.g. finance.
- 5) Partnership among the private sector to set up academies for a particular industry. For example, tourism is a budding sector that requires private sector participation. There is potential to set up an institution to give schools leavers the necessary skill to work in the industry.
- 6) Provision of management expertise: The active participation of the private (business) sector could potentially have the greatest impact of the expansion of opportunities, improving cost effectiveness of educational delivery as well as in providing the quality of education in Nigeria.

There seems to be natural aversion to profiting from education and skills development. However, the profit motive has been highly effective in stimulating growth, access, quality cannot expect the same effect in the education sector. If the Nigerian private sector should think about education differently - as an opportunity for entrepreneurship, innovation, competition, and compensation based on productivity, it can bring to the education sector high performance standards and private sector skills, and help to address the problems plaguing the education sector (Emunemu, 2008).

The Way Forward

This paper recommends the following as a way forward in enhancing private sector participation in the educational development in a growing economy.

- 1) Private corporate bodies and organizations should be encouraged to make education one of the social services that should be provided to their communities.
- 2) An adequate legislation should be enacted to protect private investors in education against government whims and caprices, which may lead to compulsory take-over of their schools any time in the future.
- 3) Government must ensure that its agencies do not exploit private investors and thereby increasing the cost of private education to the public
- 4) Through a favourable lending policy, government should encourage banks to have a more liberal lending policy for

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